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Duxbury Clipper

Biographers of Talk Radio Icon to Discuss New Book ✓

Jerry Williams – radio pioneer, civil rights crusader, and former South Shore resident – has been called the “Dean of Talk Radio” for his contributions to the industry, although many in today’s crowded marketplace of call-in shows may not recognize his name.

At the peak of his influence on WRKO radio in Boston in the mid-1980s, Williams helped repeal a seat belt law and ran a one-man wrecking crew against Michael Dukakis’s presidential campaign. When he died in 2003, the Radio Hall of Fame inductee was remembered as one of the first talk-show hosts to put listeners on the air at the old WMEX in 1957, after primitive time-delay technology made it possible to bleep callers if necessary.

Authors Steve Elman and Alan Tolz, who produced Williams’ shows at high points in his career, will discuss the legacy of Jerry Williams and their new book, “Burning Up The Air:” Jerry Williams, Talk Radio, and the Life in Between, during an appearance at the Duxbury Free Library, 77 Alden St., Sunday, April 13 at 2 p.m.

Elman and Tolz tell the inside story of how, while Larry King and Rush Limbaugh were just getting started at the microphone, Williams set standards for the form. He stood up for civil rights when such talk could get you killed, questioned Vietnam long before Walter Cronkite, savaged Richard Nixon while 49 states were reelecting him, and put frank talk about sex on the air when Howard Stern was still a DJ.

The authors had access to his files, family members, and their own memories. The result is an enlightening biography that gives readers an inside view of the glories of radio and the pitfalls of fame.

Elman and Tolz will sign copies of their book and will be available for a question-and-answer period following the talk.

The event is co-sponsored by Westwinds Bookshop and the Duxbury Free Library, and will be held in the library’s Merry Room. Refreshments will be served, and admission is free, but because of limited seating, attendees are asked to register at the bookshop or library. Walk-ins will be accommodated as seating allows.

Interested fans who cannot attend the event are welcome to reserve a signed copy of the book that can be picked up at Westwinds at their convenience. Call 781-934-2128 to reserve your book.

